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Page A-10

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Helms: Charges Against CIA a 'Myth'

Associated Press

Former CIA Director Richard Helms says that an accusation the intelligence community withheld secrets from Congress over the years "is a myth that's been created in the Congress."

"I don't know of any director, at least during my time, who fiddle-faddled with Congress," Helms, a 25-year veteran of the CIA, told the Senate Intelligence Committee yesterday.

"We presented a budget every year that had all the details. There were no secret wars in Laos and all that nonsense. That's part of the mythology of Washington," he said.

Helms was fined \$2,000 and given a suspended two-year jail sentence last year after pleading no contest to misdemeanor charges of failing to testify fully before a Senate committee in 1973 about CIA covert actions in Chile. He said yesterday he was the victim of a law that was unclear and ambiguous about protection of sources

HELMS' STATEMENT about disclosures was touched off when Sen. Birch Bayh, D-Ind., chairman of the committee, said there were efforts in the past "to not let Congress have the information or make Congress believe something was happening a little different than it actually is."

Responding to Helms' defense of the agency's performance, Bayh said he did not know whether it was the fault of Congress or the CIA, but there is "a general perception a large number of congressmen didn't know what was going on."

Helms, director of the CIA from 1966 through 1972, testified before the committee on a bill establishing a new charter for the intelligence community.

He said the committee "is attacking the problem of dealing with the intelligence community in a way that seems to raise more difficulties than it resolves."